

CAPITOL STUFF

By TED LEWIS

Washington, Sept. 16—The hope of the Senate leaders that the nuclear test ban treaty would be ratified before President Kennedy appears before the United Nations on Friday has now been knocked into a cocked hat by the strange performance of one senator.

What Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) has now done has infuriated the opposition to the treaty, which had a right to consider that its arguments should be taken seriously and not be brushed aside with cute scorn by the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

By comparing the wisdom of seagulls favorably with the IQ of treaty opponents, Fulbright has probably delayed the ratification vote until next week at the earliest. His contrived levity and sarcasm was aimed at the 13 to 15 Senators, including the highly respected Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.), who constitute the core of the treaty opposition. They definitely now will talk more, and with considerably more heat, because of the Fulbright effort to hold them up to ridicule.

As a result Kennedy is not going to be able to point with pride in New York on Friday to the Senate's rubber-stamping of the nuclear agreement as he had hoped in order to give his UN speech significance.

The flippant treatment of the opposition by Fulbright amazed other Senate leaders in the treaty fight. It came at a time when the Administration considered that it had won on the merits of the issue and was relieved that the debate had been high-level and left of any cheap name-calling.

What was worse was that the new, personalized note was injected by the head of the Foreign Relations Committee, which has sponsored the treaty. And by an individual Senator who prides himself on his fine sense of diplomacy, which is supposed to be an attribute of every chairman of the esteemed committee.

Yet there was Fulbright, so taken by the peaceful behavior of seagulls compared with man's inability to handle global affairs, that he could not resist giving the Senate a sardonic lecture.

It's All Very Learned Stuff

His discourse on seagull wisdom was larded with delicate little barbs, sharp as all getout, at Senate treaty opponents. It was all erudite stuff, but to be sure that the point went across he once extemporized to the effect that "even a 10-year-old child would be able to see that this treaty should be rejected."

The way Fulbright told it, the seagull has learned to live at peace with his fellows, substituting ceremonial expressions of hostility for fighting.

He twitted the treaty opponents by suggesting that "the genius of modern science" should invent a bomb which "would permit us the fun and excitement of nuclear war without getting killed."

There was no doubt that this seagull stuff was not cleared with either the White House or State Department. Even Presidential adviser Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who finds amusement in such Ivy League type of banter as Fulbright delivered in a dead-panned Senate, would not be so gullible as to okay the extolling of seagull virtues.



Sen. J. William Fulbright
A sardonic performance

STATINTL

Thinks Himself a Good Pin-Pricker?

This Fulbright faux pas can only be explained on the basis that he considers himself a real wit, a master of the art of gentle sarcasm and that he has found that among the eggheads he is admired for his skill in this area of the well-rounded but pin-pricking phrase.

The only clue as to why he decided to treat the Senate to his sardonic witticisms on the treaty issue is the fact that he had a certain amount of success in a previous performance.

This occurred Aug. 2 in a sarcastic and sly appraisal of Sen. Barry Goldwater's "rare gift of clarity" in a political speech.

"So lucid is his discourse," Fulbright then said, "that he makes us wonder what all the fuss has been over nuclear weapons and international tensions and unemployment and all the other stubborn problems that perplex the American people."

There was a lot more of this glib stuff. And it did go over big with Goldwater critics in the Senate, both Republicans and Democrats. So it makes sense to figure that Fulbright thought he could poke sarcastic fun at those who don't agree with him on the present issue before the Senate. But this time no colleague slapped his back and praised him for giving anybody hell. They were too embarrassed by the needless taunts at the treaty opposition.

J. William Has Been Carried Away Before

Fulbright, the record shows, has occasionally in the past been carried away by his own ideas. For example, after the off-year Congressional elections in 1946 when the GOP swept House and Senate, he urged that President Truman resign in favor of a Republican Secretary of State.

Otherwise Fulbright said, the Democrats would suffer a disastrous defeat in 1948. And, what was worse in the Senator's mind, "another world war" was likely to result if Truman stayed in the White House after his party had been repudiated by the voters.

At that time the name-calling between Fulbright and Truman in private was close to unprintable. The Senator referred to Truman as a "nincompoop." Truman referred to Fulbright as an "over-educated . . ."

This is a vendetta that has continued to this day and explains in part the low opinion that Truman had for Adlai Stevenson, who used Fulbright as a top campaign aid.

It could be that Fulbright's trouble goes back to the fact he was a sort of child prodigy. He graduated from the University of Arkansas when he was 20, then went to Oxford as a Rhodes scholar and before he entered politics 25 years ago he was a professor and later president of his alma mater. He cannot let a chance go by to show his erudition.